

CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

1. (currently amended) A method for baling fibrous plants, especially flax, hemp or sisal, comprising the steps ~~consisting~~, in succession, ~~in of:~~ cutting off the bottoms of the plants, ~~in~~ placing the plants without the bottoms in windrows on the soil, ~~in letting them~~ the plants be at least partly retted, ~~in gathering them~~ the plants and ~~in rolling them~~ the plants up, characterized in that it ~~consists in the method further comprises~~ cutting off the tops of the plants before ~~they~~ the plants are windrowed.

2. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1, characterized in that it comprises, after the gathering step and before the rolling-up step, the steps ~~consisting in of~~ crushing the stalks of the plants without the tops and bottoms so as to break up the wood filaments that ~~they~~ the stalks contain, ~~in decorticating the crushed stalks so as to strip them~~ the stalks of the wood filament fragments and shives while retaining scutched fibers, and ~~in laying the thus scutched fibers out flat.~~

3. (currently amended) The method according to claim 2, characterized in that the crushing step ~~consists in~~ comprises passing the stalks of the plants without tops and bottoms between at least one set of two parallel rollers capable of rotating in opposite directions and including splines at least partly imbricated in one another, the stalks being parallel to the rollers as they pass ~~between them~~ the rollers.

4. (currently amended) The method according to claim 2, characterized in that the decorticating step is carried out in two successive phases, during each of which the stalks of the plants without tops and bottoms are decorticated over one half of their periphery.

5. (currently amended) The method according to 2, characterized in that ~~it~~ the method further includes a step ~~consisting in~~ of recovering the wood filament fragments and the shives.

6. (currently amended) A machine for baling fibrous plants, especially flax, hemp or sisal, which are placed in windrows on the soil and at least partly retted, comprising means (3) for gathering the plants, means (4) for crushing ~~the stalks of the plants~~ without bottoms so as to break up the wood filaments that ~~they~~ the stalks contain, means (10) for decorticating the crushed stalks so as to strip ~~them~~ the crushed stalks of the wood filament fragments and shives while retaining scutched fibers, means (31) for laying the ~~thus~~ scutched fibers out flat, and means (32) for rolling up the ~~latter~~ scutched fibers in the form of bales, characterized in that the crushing means (4) comprises at least one group of two parallel rollers (5; 6) placed one above the other and capable of rotating in opposite directions, the rollers having splines (7; 8) at least partly imbricated in one another and being placed so that the stalks to be crushed pass between them, being the rollers and are parallel thereto.

7. (currently amended) The machine according to claim 6, characterized in that the decorticating means (10) comprise two decorticator units for decorticating over one half of the periphery the stalks without the tops and bottoms.

8. (currently amended) The machine according to claim 7, characterized in that each decorticator unit (10) comprises two drums (25) extending parallel to the path of the stalks (26) to be decorticated and ~~each defining a corridor (30) of constant width with~~ a separator element (28) located at least partly between them the drums (25), corridors (30) of constant width being defined between the separator

element (28) and the respective drums (25), the drums each having longitudinal slats (27) on their lateral surface and being capable of rotating in opposite directions in order for ~~their~~ the slats to move along substantially one half of ~~the~~ a length of the stalks, while applying the ~~latter stalks~~ against the two longitudinal flanks (29) of the separator element.

9. (original) The machine according to claim 8, characterized in that the longitudinal slats (27) of the drums (25) are placed radially and at equal distances from one another, and have a height practically equal to the width of the corridors (30).

10. (currently amended) The machine according to claim 8, characterized in that the slats (27) are made of a flexible material, ~~especially leather or wood~~.

11. (currently amended) The machine according to claim 6, characterized in that ~~it~~ the machine further includes means for recovering the wood filament fragments and the shives.

12. (currently amended) The machine according to claim 6, characterized in that ~~it~~ the machine further includes a driver cabin (33) located at ~~the~~ a front and in ~~the~~ a central part.

13. (currently amended) The machine according to claim 12, characterized in that ~~it~~ the machine includes two baling units placed on either side of its a longitudinal axis of the machine, each of the baling units comprising the gathering means (3), the crushing means (4), the decorticating means (10), the laying-out-flat means (31) and the rolling-up means (32).